

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for screening a patient for cancer or precancer, the method comprising  
2 the steps of:

3 detecting in a patient tissue or body fluid sample comprising exfoliated cells and  
4 cellular debris, nucleic acid fragments that are greater than 200 base pairs in length;  
5 the presence of said fragments being a positive screen for cancer or precancer.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said detecting step comprises conducting an  
2 amplification reaction designed to amplify only nucleic acids in said sample that are  
3 greater than 200 base pairs in length.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said sample is selected from the group  
2 consisting of stool, pus, and urine.

1 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of enriching said sample for  
2 human DNA.

1 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of isolating human DNA from  
2 said sample.

1 6. A method for screening a patient for cancer or precancer, the method comprising  
2 the steps of:

3 determining in a patient tissue or body fluid sample a first amount of nucleic acid  
4 fragments greater than 200 base pairs in length;

5 determining in said sample a second amount of nucleic acid fragments less than  
6 about 200 base pairs in length;

7 determining a ratio between said first amount and said second amount; and

8 identifying a positive screen if said ratios exceeds a threshold ratio for patients  
9 who do not have cancer or precancer.

1 7. A method for screening a patient for cancer or precancer, the method comprising  
2 the step of

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- 3 detecting in a patient tissue or body fluid sample comprising exfoliated cells a  
4 nucleic acid fragment of a length that is not expected to be present in said sample in a  
5 healthy patient;  
6 the presence of said fragment being a positive screen.

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